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ABSTRACT

This study surveyed faculty and students of Indiana University to ascertain their attitudes toward the evaluation of faculty by means of student ratings. Questionnaires were mailed to 200 faculty members, and 510 students were surveyed in classes. Results included the following: (1) faculty expressed generally favorable attitudes toward the use of student ratings; (2) while faculty believe the ratings have helped them improve their teaching, they have reservations about their use in personnel decisions and would like to have a peer review system as well; (3) students say that they take faculty ratings seriously, a finding that conflicts with the perceptions of faculty; and (4) among the factors considered important by students were how much they learned in the course and the instructor's fairness, impartiality, organization, preparation, rapport with students and expertise in the field. It was concluded that student ratings are used appropriately at the university and that they represent an efficient source of data on teaching. Survey segments with responses are displayed in eight tables. (KM)

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University Faculty and Students' Opinions of Student Ratings

INDIANA STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Number Fifty-Five

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UNIVERSITY FACULTY AND STUDENTS' OPINIONS OF STUDENT RATINGS

Lucy Cheser Jacobs

INDIANA STUDIES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Number Fifty-Five

A Monograph of the

BUREAU OF EVALUATIVE STUDIES AND TESTING

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

ABSTRACT

This study surveyed both University faculty and students in order to ascertain their attitudes toward the evaluation of faculty by means of student ratings. Questionnaires were mailed to faculty members; students were surveyed in classes.

It was concluded that student ratings are used appropriately at the University and that they represent an efficient source of data on teaching. Both faculty and students have generally favorable attitudes toward student ratings.

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University Faculty and Students' Opinions of Student Ratings

Evaluation of faculty members by their students has become commonplace on America's campuses. But the evaluation by students remains one of the most controversial issues in higher education.

Instructors began systematically collecting student opinions about college courses more than 60 years ago. Student ratings were originally designed to provide information that would help instructors improve their teaching. Students were considered to be in a favorable position to report on teacher characteristics such as their preparation for class, communication skills, enthusiasm for teaching, and interest in students. Furthermore, it was believed that students as consumers have both a right and an obligation to rate their instructors. Without systematic ratings, students would have little opportunity to provide meaningful feedback to the instructors and programs directly affecting students.

Ratings are no longer used solely for the purpose of improving instruction, however. Faced with economic constraints, more and more institutions are using student ratings to provide information that is used for personnel decisions on pay, promotion, and tenure. Many faculty members object to this use of student ratings and some have even refused to participate in their institutions' ratings. For example, members of the mathematical sciences department at George Mason University voted not to participate in the university's course-evaluation program. They claimed that school officials were attempting to assess the quality of teaching numerically and were misusing the evaluations in matters of promotion and tenure (*Chronicle of Higher Education,* April 18, 1984). Although controversial, the ratings have rarely stimulated opposition of this nature and magnitude.

Student ratings are widely used at Indiana University. Over 113,000 of I.U.'s Multiple Option System of Course and Instructor Evaluation (Multi-Op) rating sheets were processed during the academic year, 1986-87. In addition, some schools and departments on campus have their own rating forms that would not be included in the above count. No data are available, however, on how I.U. faculty feel about student ratings. One purpose of this study was to survey a random sample of faculty members to ascertain their attitudes and concerns about the student rating system.

A second part of the study focused on a survey of undergraduate students. How do students feel about their role as faculty evaluators? What factors do they consider when they rate faculty? A random sample of I.U. undergraduates was surveyed in order to obtain data relevant to these questions.

Faculty Opinions of Student Ratings

Method

Two forms of a survey dealing with student ratings were prepared for use with the faculty sample. Two forms were used because of the number of questions to be asked. To include all the questions on one form would have made it too lengthy for maximum returns. The two forms had some common items as well as a number of items unique to each. An open-ended question was included on each form.

The university printing department printed the questionnaires and drew a random sample of 200 names from its faculty list. The department provided mailing labels and sent the questionnaires out via campus mail. One-half of the total sample was

randomly selected to receive Form A; the other half received Form B. Ninety-six surveys (53 form A and 43 Form B) were returned for an over-all response rate of 48 percent. That response rate is somewhat misleading, however. The so-called faculty list contained names of individuals who were not teaching faculty so many of the 200 names drawn to receive questionnaires should not have received them. The surveys went to deans and other administrators, persons in admissions, the accounting office, telephone services, etc. and even to retired faculty. Many called to say that they had received the survey, but that it was inappropriate for them.

The results were tabulated for the two faculty surveys separately; responses to common items were combined. A break-down of responses was made on the basis of gender, level of the class (undergraduate or graduate), size of class, tenured or non-tenured status, and certain other variables that may be related to opinions on ratings.

Results

The same biographic items were included on each form. Table 1 summarizes the responses from the total group. Over three-fourths of the faculty respondents were male. Approximately sixty percent had taught at the university level for more than ten years; another 36 percent for 2-10 years. The majority were tenured faculty who indicated that they primarily taught undergraduate courses.

Table 1. Biographic Data for Faculty Sample

	N	%
1. How many years have you been teaching at the University level?		
A. This is my first year	2	2
B. 2-5	13	14
C. 6-10	21	22
D. 11-19	29	30
E. 20 or more	28	29
F. no response	3	3
2. What is your present rank?	N	%
A. Assistant professor	20	21
B. Associate professor	24	25
C. Professor	38	40
D. Other	10	10
E. no response	4	4
3. Are you	N	%
A. tenured	61	64
B. non-tenured	32	33
C. no response	3	3
4. Do you teach primarily	N	%
A. undergraduate courses	50	52
B. graduate courses	34	35
C. no response	12	13
5. What is your sex?	N	%
A. female	19	20
B. male	73	76
C. no response	4	4
6. Do you teach mainly in	N	%
A. Physical science, biological science, mathematics	29	30
B. Social sciences	20	21
C. Humanities, music, fine arts	18	19
D. Education	13	14
E. Business	11	11
F. no response	5	5
7. What is the approximate size of most of the classes you teach?	N	%
A. less than 25	29	30
B. 26-50	21	22
C. 51-100	15	16
D. 101-200	10	10
E. more than 200	12	13
F. no response	9	9

The respondents represented various teaching areas with the highest percentage coming from math and the physical/biological sciences. Slightly over half reported that *most* of the classes they taught had fewer than 50 in enrollment. Of course, varying numbers of the faculty respondents taught larger classes.

The respondents were asked a number of questions about their use of the rating forms. The responses for the total group are summarized in Table 2. Most instructors (82%) use the student ratings only at the end of the semester. The most popular time is to administer them sometime during the last week of classes; 28 percent said they use part of the last class meeting for the ratings. The respondents were divided between their use of the required "departmental core" items only and the standard Multi-Op rating form provided by the Bureau of Evaluative Studies and Testing, with slightly more using the latter. More than one-third of the faculty respondents follow the recommended procedure of having another person (e.g. a graduate assistant) administer the rating forms, collect and deliver them to the campus scanning office for analysis. Another 34 percent said that they designate a student in the class to collect the questionnaires and deliver them to the departmental office or the scanning office. One-fifth of the respondents stay in the room while students complete the questionnaires. No faculty members said they required students to provide identification on the rating forms.

Table 2. Responses of Total Sample on General Question About Use of Student Ratings (N=96)

		N	%
1.	Do you generally use the student evaluation forms?		
	A. At end of semester only	79	82
	B. Both at mid-semester and end	14	15
	C. no response	3	3
2.	Do you generally use	N	%
	A. Standard form provided by B.E.S.T.	31	32
	B. Departmental "core" items only	27	28
	C. Departmental "core" plus personally selected items	12	13
	D. A personally selected set of items	19	20
	E. no response	7	7
3.	When do you usually give your student ratings?	N	%
	A. During last week of classes	44	46
	B. At last class meeting	27	28
	C. On the day of the final exam	9	9
	D. Other	14	15
	E. no response	2	2
4.	When student ratings are used, do you	N	%
	A. Administer ratings yourself and collect them	19	20
	B. Have a graduate student come in and administer/collect	34	35
	C. Have one of students in class collect them and deliver to scoring office	33	34
	D. Other	8	8
	E. no response	2	2
5.	Do you require students to put their ID numbers on rating forms?	N	%
	A. Yes	0	0
	B. Uncertain	6	6
	C. No	88	92
	D. no response	2	2

Form A contained a set of 22 opinion statements about student ratings. Respondents were asked to indicate their responses to each statement on a five-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The results are summarized in Table 3. The data in Table 3 indicate that Indiana University faculty members have generally favorable attitudes toward the use of student ratings, although only one-fourth of the respondents believed that student ratings are the *best* procedure for evaluating classroom effectiveness of instructors. Forty-three percent of the respondents believed that peer ratings would be more effective than student ratings in improving instruction, but 38 percent were undecided which is more effective.

Table 3. Responses to Opinion Statements on Form A of Faculty Survey (Percentages) (N=53)

		%				
		SA	A	U	D	SD
1.	Student ratings represent the best procedure for evaluating instructors' classroom performance.....	6	19	24	40	11
2.	Peer ratings would be more effective than student ratings in improving instruction.....	10	33	38	17	2
3.	The use of student ratings should be optional.....	13	12	13	38	23
4.	Student ratings have helped me to improve my teaching.....	32	38	13	11	6
5.	Student ratings of instruction should be a more important source of information for personnel decisions than faculty research and/or service.....	2	13	17	28	40
6.	Items in student ratings are too general.....	6	19	24	43	8
7.	I have confidence in students' ability to judge good teaching.....	6	41	23	17	13
8.	I resent having the quality of my teaching assessed by numerical scores.....	4	11	17	47	21
9.	Students don't give adequate thought to rating process.....	9	38	28	23	2
10.	Student ratings should be used for feedback to teachers rather than for decisions on pay, promotion and tenure.....	19	38	11	25	6
11.	I sometimes can't tell whether my ratings are good or bad.....	2	25	13	35	25
12.	I believe faculty try to manipulate student judgements of their teaching performance.....	2	23	29	33	13
13.	All of items on student rating forms should be instructor-selected.....	0	10	19	42	29
14.	Student rating system gives students an inflated view of their own power.....	6	8	15	43	28
15.	I regard student ratings a benefit to me personally, not as an imposition.....	25	52	13	10	0
16.	Student ratings have a negative effect on teacher morale that outweighs positive effects.....	4	25	19	44	8
17.	I have had no difficulty interpreting results.....	17	50	13	15	4
18.	The most effective forms combine instructor-selected items and a set of items common to a department, school or the entire University.....	17	58	17	4	4
19.	Faculty members should have the right to decide to whom the rating results are to be sent.....	13	33	19	31	4
20.	I receive more helpful information from the qualitative statements than from the quantitatively-based rating items.....	23	35	29	11	2
21.	I believe the collecting of student opinions leads to little or no change in the quality of college teaching.....	12	18	31	37	2
22.	Even when teachers can interpret their ratings, they often do not know what to do in order to improve their teaching.....	15	48	17	17	2

This sample of faculty members believed that the main purpose of student ratings is to improve classroom instruction. An impressive 77 percent said the student ratings have been a benefit to them personally and 70 percent reported that the ratings have provided information that has helped them to improve their teaching. At the same time, more than two-thirds of the respondents disagreed that student ratings should be a *more* important source of information to use for personnel decisions than faculty research and/or service to the university.

It was interesting that almost half (47%) of the instructors agreed or strongly agreed that they have confidence in students' ability to judge good teaching; only 30 percent disagreed. The majority didn't believe that ratings have a negative effect on teacher morale and believed that the use of student ratings should be required for faculty members. According to these respondents, the most effective rating forms to use combine instructor-selected items and a set of items common to all faculty within a department or school. Instructors especially like the qualitative, open-ended statements that can be included in the rating form. Fifty-eight percent said they receive more helpful information from the qualitative statements than from the quantitatively-based rating items.

These respondents (46%) tended to believe that faculty members should have the right to decide to whom the rating results are to be sent; 35 percent disagreed with this idea. While instructors agreed that they have no difficulty interpreting the analyzed results, almost two-thirds of this group said that instructors don't know what to do in order to improve their teaching.*

Somewhat similar questions were asked of respondents receiving Form B. Their responses are summarized in Table 4. When asked if they received *new* information about their teaching effectiveness from the student ratings, almost one-half of them said "No"; almost one-fourth said "Yes"; the others were undecided. Forty-nine percent of the instructors said the students' ratings of their teaching did not differ from their own self-ratings. Of the 19 percent who said students' ratings differed from their self-ratings, all said the student ratings were *lower*.

The instructors were almost equally divided in whether they find the qualitative information more helpful or whether qualitative and quantitative are equally helpful. Only five percent find the quantitative more helpful. Eighty-one percent of this sample reported that they have made specific changes in their teaching as a result of the student ratings. When asked to specify the kind of changes they have made, they responded:

> Changed the number of exams in the course; started using more visual aids in lectures; changed text and the amount of outside reading required; started talking more slowly; more classroom discussion; scheduled more office hours; reduced work load in the course; changed speed and density of lectures; scheduled help sessions; started giving more feedback on tests; more handouts; prepared a better syllabus for the course.

When asked about changes, one instructor said "I'm now teaching to the evaluation form." Another respondent listed a number of changes that had been made, but then added ". . . none of which ever changed subsequent course evaluations."

The data from the sample receiving Form B generally agreed with that found in Form A. The faculty members do not have any difficulty interpreting the analyses of

* The revised Multi-Op printout now informs instructors about sources of help available on campus.

Table 4. Responses to Questions on Form B of Faculty Survey (N=43)

	#	%
1. Do you generally receive new information about your teaching effectiveness from the ratings?		
A. Yes	10	23
B. Uncertain	13	30
C. No	20	47
2. Which type of information do you find more helpful?		
A. Qualitative information	22	51
B. Quantitative ratings	2	5
C. They are equally helpful	19	44
3. Do students' ratings of your teaching differ from how you rate yourself?		
A. Yes	8	19
B. Uncertain	14	32
C. No	21	49
4. If "yes" to the above question, are students' ratings generally higher or lower than your self-ratings?		
A. Lower	8	19
B. Higher	0	0
5. Have you made any specific change in your teaching as a result of the students' ratings?		
A. Yes	35	81
B. Uncertain	2	5
C. No	6	14
6. Have you ever had difficulty interpreting the numerical results of the students' ratings?		
A. Yes	11	26
B. Uncertain	4	9
C. No	27	63
D. no response	1	2
7. Which type of normative data would you find most helpful in interpreting your ratings?		
A. University-wide norms	10	23
B. Departmental norms	10	23
C. Norms based on class size	8	19
D. Norms based on instructor's rank	0	0
E. Norms based on class level	11	26
F. no response	4	9
8. For personnel decisions, do you think the most weight should be given to		
A. Student ratings	4	9
B. Peer ratings	7	16
C. Supervisor ratings	5	12
D. Weight the above equally	25	58
E. no response	2	5
9. Do you think that student ratings sometimes have a negative effect on teacher morale?		
A. Yes	17	40
B. Uncertain	14	33
C. No	12	27
10. Which of the following do you feel should receive the greatest weight in personnel decisions?		
A. Teaching	2	5
B. Research	11	26
C. Service	0	0
D. Teaching and research should have equal weight; service less weight	24	56
E. Teaching, research and service should receive equal weight	6	14

the ratings. They were divided on which type of normative data they would prefer to have for interpreting their ratings. The most common responses were university-wide norms, departmental norms, or norms based on class level (lower division, upper division, graduate). Nineteen percent would like to have norms based on class size.

When asked whether teaching, research, or service should receive the greatest weight in personnel decisions, 56 percent of these respondents said, "Teaching and

research should receive equal weight; service less weight." Approximately one-fourth said research should receive greatest weight; only five percent thought teaching should be most important. The majority thought that, for evaluating instructors, equal weight should be given to student ratings, peer ratings, and supervisor (department chair) ratings. But then one respondent added, "If only we had peer ratings!"

Some schools are experimenting with a "computerized interactive communication system" whereby students communicate anonymously with instructors via computer about instructional practices throughout a course; instructors respond via computer. This system provides continuous feedback from the first day of class instead of having to wait until the end of the semester for student ratings. This sample of faculty was asked if they thought such an arrangement would be beneficial to them. Opinions were mixed on this concept. Forty-four percent said, "Yes"; 19 percent said, "No"; 37 percent were uncertain.

The open-ended question which asked the faculty respondents to make any other comments about student ratings elicited a large number of responses. Some typical comments were:

> The use of anonymous ratings from students of faculty teaching raises important ethical questions—especially if the ratings are used for personnel decisions.
>
> I believe that student ratings are on the whole useful. However, I wonder whether their compulsory use would violate academic freedom.
>
> It is unfortunate that they are often the *only* source of information about an instructor's teaching.
>
> I much prefer open-ended, essay-type questions to multiple-choice questions on evaluations. Multiple-choice puts words into students' mouths that might not emerge spontaneously, and extracts opinions on topics they might not have been concerned with at all.
>
> I don't have a lot of confidence in them because I don't think most students take them very seriously. I'm not sure they consider what they learn as much as they do other factors—like comfort level with the teacher, their grade, etc.
>
> I tend to think that only very *bad* student ratings should affect personnel decisions. I think the over-all level of the ratings are overly influenced by whether the students like the instructor *personally*. Instructors that learn students' names and chat with them and instructors who have a mastery approach to teaching are well liked.
>
> Student evaluations focus on entertainment, rather than pedagogic value. I am most impressed when, several years later, students comment on how useful a course was and how they subsequently appreciated the hard work forced on them during the course. Students are not generally in a good position to evaluate a course for its future relevance and importance.
>
> I favor student ratings and feel they have improved my teaching. However, they should be considered but indicators. I've found the most valuable student evaluation of teaching comes five to 10 years after graduation. Our departmental curriculum committee made such an assessment. The "emotions of the moment" are long past, and the former student can make a valid assessment of the value of the instruction.

Speaking as someone who has received a departmental teaching award based on good student ratings, I think much more emphasis should be placed on peer evaluation and information gathered from alumni. From my perspective, there is almost no meaningful evaluation of teaching at I.U. Student ratings are used (inappropriately) to fill what is otherwise an absolute vacuum.

In smaller classes (10-40) students seem to be more objective in their evaluation than in larger classes. I think perhaps because interaction is greater in smaller classes and students become more involved.

I am convinced that students base their judgment primarily on some global reaction to the course, which can be modulated by especially salient specific factors. Student ratings can markedly differ from objective measures of what happens in the class.

I feel they are quite unfair to use as major items for salary, etc. since the easy graders have an advantage. Also, it is much harder to get high ratings in certain required courses than in advanced, small classes.

There seems to be a large "halo" effect in student evaluations. One favorable or one unfavorable incident colors the responses to all remaining questions. Or it may be a general overall attitude towards the faculty member that influences all responses. Therefore, the responses are not objective nor independent. The "halo" effect can work positively or negatively, but usually negatively. High work-load courses and tough grading cause lower evaluations on all questions. It would be nice to have a computer program that would throw out the top 10% and bottom 10% of the responses and then calculate means from the remaining 80%. This would eliminate some of the bias.

We need to address the problem of how to determine which students in a class are capable of evaluating teaching. I would estimate that a minimum of 50% of my 100-level students are unqualified to evaluate my teaching. Until some system is developed which precludes the unqualified from teacher evaluation, student ratings will have little credibility.

Most of my students are freshmen. They have little experience with which to evaluate teaching and their criticisms tend to be too vague to be of much help or are based on trivialities (not approving of instructor's wardrobe). I keep giving evaluations but have yet to have much useful return from them—useful that is in terms of becoming a more effective teacher. The best advice has always come from peers and superiors.

Peer rating would be more effective than student rating *if* peer review existed, and for several reasons: *most* students do not have enough experience in the teaching of the material at hand to be able to suggest alternatives (though some do); peers are more familiar (as a group) with both the material and the means of instruction available; faculty have more difficulty ignoring or making excuses for the judgments of their peers. There is a hands-off attitude among faculty, that each one's course is his own bailiwick; while there are sound professional reasons for this principle, it stifles overt criticism (including constructive suggestions) except between close comrades, while behind-the-back criticism thrives on the persistent uncorrected problems.

Summary of Faculty Responses

This sample of university faculty members expressed generally favorable attitudes toward the use of student ratings. They believed that the ratings have helped them to improve their teaching. These respondents, however, would also like to have a peer review system at the university.

While the faculty find student ratings beneficial to the improvement of their teaching, they have reservations about their use in personnel decisions. Most of these respondents do not even believe that teaching should receive the greatest consideration in personnel decisions. The majority thought that teaching and research should have equal weight; service should receive somewhat less weight. When teaching is evaluated for personnel decisions, student ratings should not be the sole basis for the evaluation. Peer ratings and ratings of superiors should receive equal weight. Some faculty members said they find alumni ratings useful.

Based on this sample, it can be concluded that I.U. faculty follow standardized procedures in the administration and collection of the ratings. That is, most leave the room while students complete the questionnaires and they absolutely do not require identification from students.

Three findings appear to have special implications for the university:

(1) While the instructors agree that they have confidence in students' ability to judge good teaching, they don't believe that students give adequate thought to the rating process. This feeling was expressed in the responses to the open-ended questions as well as to the closed statements. Perhaps some effort needs to be made at the University to inform students of the importance of their ratings of faculty and the need to give careful attention to the process.

(2) Instructors report that they know how to interpret the analyzed results of the ratings, but say that they don't know what to do in order to improve. Greater effort should be made to make expert help available for instructors who want to develop more effective teaching strategies; or at least we need to inform faculty of facilities and persons already available at the University.

(3) These faculty members believe that the student ratings should be supplemented with a peer-review system. Students are not in a position to evaluate a number of important teacher behaviors such as knowledge of subject matter, whether material is up-to-date, etc. Some departments on campus already have peer review systems, but others do not. The latter may want to explore the use of peer ratings of classroom performance, course outlines, curriculum materials, etc.

Student Opinions of Students' Rating of Faculty

Method

A questionnaire dealing with students' perceptions of and experiences with faculty evaluation procedures was prepared. Instructors in a number of departments at Indiana University were contacted for permission to administer the questionnaire in their classes. A total of 510 students enrolled in classes in geography, telecommunications, religious studies, education, psychology, and physical education completed the questionnaire in the spring of 1987. The sample was composed of 20 percent freshmen, 32 percent sophomore, 33 percent juniors and 15 percent seniors. Females (62%) were somewhat overrepresented in the sample.

Results

The responses of this sample of students at Indiana University indicated that they have favorable attitudes toward the rating process. Table 5 shows that an overwhelming majority (71%) of the students said that they like to rate their instructors and felt that students should have the opportunity to do so. Only four percent said they didn't like it—that they looked upon the rating procedure as a chore they were required to do in their classes. One-fourth had no strong feelings either way about the ratings.

Table 5. Students' Attitudes Toward Rating Faculty

	N	%
1. How do you feel about the process of rating your instructor each semester?		
A. I like it; I think students should have an opportunity to rate their instructors.	355	71
B. I don't have strong feelings either way about rating my instructors.	127	25
C. I don't like it; I regard it as a chore that I'm required to do in my classes.	20	4
2. How seriously do you take the task of rating the various aspects of your instructors' classroom performance?	N	%
A. Very seriously	113	22
B. Seriously	295	58
C. Undecided	53	10
D. Not very seriously	43	8
E. Not seriously at all	5	1
3. How competent do you feel you are in recognizing and judging good classroom teaching?	N	%
A. Very competent	177	35
B. Competent	303	59
C. Not sure	26	5
D. Not very competent	4	1
E. Not at all competent	0	0
4. What is the principal basis for the ratings you make of specific aspects of instructors' classroom performance?	N	%
A. I make comparisons among professors.	187	37
B. I have my own ideas about what and how things should be done in the classroom.	269	53
C. I use both of the above.	50	10
5. Do you approach the evaluation differently when you're rating courses that are required for your major compared with elective courses?	N	%
A. Yes, I'm more serious and apply different criteria when evaluating required courses.	117	23
B. Undecided	75	15
C. No, I use the same criteria and am equally serious about evaluating required courses and elective courses.	316	62

The students reported that they give serious consideration to the ratings. Four-fifths of the respondents described their approach to rating instructors as "serious" or "very serious". Only nine percent said they did not view the ratings seriously. Furthermore, students felt that they are competent to make these evaluations. Almost all (94%) of the respondents believed that they are "competent" or "very competent" to judge the teaching performance of their instructors.

The respondents were asked how they went about making ratings of their instructors. The majority reported that the principal basis for the ratings was their own ideas about what instructors ought to be doing. They also tend to make comparisons among their professors. The students said that they approach the rating of instructors in elective courses just as seriously as they do the rating of instructors in required courses in their major; they use the same criteria for both.

A frequent criticism of formal evaluation systems is that the student ratings are unduly influenced by course and instructor characteristics not really indicative of instructor competence. For this reason, these students were asked how much importance they attach to certain factors when they make their ratings. The responses are summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Importance of Certain Factors in Students' Ratings of Instructors

	Percentages (N=509)			
	Very Impt.	Impt.	Not very Important	Not at all Important
Teacher's rapport with students...	53	45	3	0.2
The grade your're expecting.....	26	41	29	4
How much you've learned.....	59	40	1	0.2
Teacher's personality.....	42	50	7	1
How interesting teacher has made course.....	57	40	2	0.6
Sex of instructor.....	1	2	11	86
Race of instructor.....	1	3	15	81
How fair exams are.....	62	37	1	0
How well organized and prepared instructor is.....	61	37	2	0
Teaching methods used.....	36	56	8	0.6
Amount of work required in course.	19	57	23	1
Teacher's fairness with students..	63	36	1	0.2
Teacher's expertise in field.....	55	42	2	0.6

The data in Table 6 indicate that the factors considered as "important" or "very important" in their ratings by almost all (more than 97%) of the students were how much they've learned in the course; the instructor's fairness and impartiality in dealing with students; how fair the examinations are; how well-organized and prepared the instructor is for class; the instructor's rapport with students; how interesting the instructor has made the course; and the instructor's expertise in the field. The teaching method used and the instructor's personality were considered "important" or "very important" by 92 percent of the respondents. Less important factors were the grade they expect in the course and the amount of work required; these were rated "very important" by 26 and 19 percent of the students respectively.

Students indicated that their ratings of faculty performance are not at all influenced by the race or sex of the instructor. Only three to four percent said these factors were important in their ratings.

Students were asked other questions about their experiences with ratings at the university. Their responses are summarized in Table 7. Three-fourths of the students said "No" when asked if they had ever thought that an instructor was trying to influence

students to give higher ratings. Only 12 percent said "Yes" to this question. These respondents (81%) reported that they had not ever felt afraid to give their honest opinions about a teacher/course. On the other hand, some of the respondents (40%) said they have heard of students deciding as a group prior to the ratings to "get" an instructor by all giving low ratings. Almost half, however, said they had not had such an experience.

Table 7. Students' Responses to Questions About the Rating Process

	N	%
1. Have you ever had a course where you felt that the instructor was trying to influence students to give higher ratings than they might otherwise?		
A. Yes	60	12
B. Undecided	64	13
C. No	383	75
2. Have you ever felt afraid to give your honest opinions about a teacher/course for fear of reprisal by the instructor?		
A. Yes	65	13
B. Undecided	31	6
C. No	413	81
3. Have you ever known about or had the experience of groups of students deciding prior to the ratings that they are going to "get" a professor by giving low ratings?		
A. Yes	202	40
B. Undecided	56	11
C. No	248	49
4. Prior to taking a class, do you generally consult books like the IUSA guide that shows ratings of instructors?		
A. Yes	218	43
B. Undecided	46	9
C. No	242	48

Students were asked how the rating forms are typically administered in their classes. Table 8 summarizes the responses. Seventy-seven percent said that their instructors leave the room while students complete the rating forms. They either distribute them and designate a student in the class to collect the forms or they have a graduate assistant or a colleague come in to distribute and collect the forms. Only one-fifth of the students said their instructors remain in the room. The students said, however, that they don't believe they would give more lenient ratings if the instructor did remain in the room.

According to the students, the evaluation forms are generally administered during the last week of class. Fourteen percent reported that they were administered at the last class meeting and only 3 percent said they were given on the day of the final exam. They felt that adequate time was provided for students to consider and respond to the form. Seventy-eight percent said they had never been required to supply their identification numbers on the faculty rating forms.

The students were almost equally divided on how much they use published ratings, such as the IUSA Guide, in making decisions about classes. Forty-eight percent said they did not consult published ratings, while 43 percent said they did.

Table 8. Students' Responses Concerning the Administration of Rating Forms

		N	%
1.	In your experience of rating instructors, which of the following best represents the most typical procedure followed?		
	A. The instructor distributes the survey and remains in the room while they are being completed.	99	20
	B. The instructor distributes the survey and then leaves; a student in the class is designated to collect the forms.	197	40
	C. A graduate assistant or colleague comes in to distribute and collect the forms.	179	37
	D. Other	16	3
2.	When are the evaluation forms generally Administered in your classes?	N	%
	A. During the last week of classes	370	74
	B. At the last class meeting	69	14
	C. On the day of the final exam	17	3
	D. Other	47	9
3.	Do you give (or think you would give) more lenient or generous ratings to an instructor if he/she remains in the room?	N	%
	A. Yes	41	8
	B. Undecided	70	14
	C. No	390	78
4.	Is adequate time generally provided for considering the statements and completing the evaluation forms?	N	%
	A. Yes	402	80
	B. Undecided	48	9
	C. No	55	11
5.	Have you ever been required to supply identification on a faculty rating from?	N	%
	A. Yes	32	6
	B. Not sure	81	16
	C. No	397	78

Summary of Students' Responses

This sample of Indiana University students said that they take the ratings of faculty seriously. This finding conflicted somewhat with the perceptions of faculty, 47 percent of whom did not believe that students give adequate thought to the ratings. The students also believed that they are competent to recognize and judge good classroom teaching. They have their own ideas about what good teaching is and also make comparisons among professors as a basis for their ratings. Contrary to popular belief, they do not use different standards for rating elective and required courses.

The factors they consider most important to their rating of an instructor are how much they learned in the course; the instructor's fairness and impartiality in dealing with students; how fair the examinations were; how well-organized and prepared the instructor was for class; the instructor's rapport with students; how interesting the instructor made the class; and the instructor's expertise in the field. According to these students, the grade they expect in the course and the amount of work required were less important factors in their rating. Race and gender of the instructor were

not at all important. Some students said they have known of classes' deciding as groups to give uniformly low ratings to a professor.

Based on the students' responses, it can be concluded that the ratings are administered in a standardized way. An overwhelming majority said they had never had an instructor try to manipulate students to give higher ratings. Most of the students said that their instructors leave the room while the ratings are being completed and do not require student identification.

Some students said that they find published ratings useful in making decisions about classes, but others don't use them at all.

Conclusions

Both faculty and students have generally positive attitudes toward the evaluation of faculty by means of student ratings. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that student ratings are used appropriately at Indiana University. They can be regarded as an efficient source of data on teaching. Faculty, however, would like to see student ratings supplemented with other criteria of teaching performance, such as the ratings of colleagues.